Iwata Asks

Iwata Asks is a series of interviews conducted by former Nintendo Global President **Satoru Iwata** with key creators behind the making of Nintendo games and hardware.

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A 13-Year Gap

Iwata

Today we are at Grezzo[1] in Shibuya, Tokyo for a session of "Iwata Asks" with the production staff of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D.[2]Thank you for taking time today.

Everyone

Not at all.

Iwata

All right, let's start with self-introductions.

1. GREZZO Co., Ltd.: A video game developer with its head office in Shibuya Ward, Tokyo. Mr. Koichi Ishii is CEO.

2. The Legend of Zelda™: Ocarina of Time™ 3D: An action-adventure game scheduled for release for the Nintendo 3DS™ system on June 19, 2011 in North America.

Ishii

I'm Koichi Ishii from Grezzo. I was development producer. Thank you for coming today.

Tonooka

I'm Takaaki Tonooka from Grezzo. I was a manager and programmer. Nice to meet you.

Moriya

I'm Shun Moriya, a programmer at Grezzo. Pleased to meet you.

Ikuta

I'm Nagako Ikuta from the Software Planning & Development Department at Nintendo. I worked as Grezzo's contact at the software development department.

Shimizu

I'm Takao Shimizu from the EAD Tokyo Software Development Department at Nintendo. I made all sorts of arrangements to facilitate Grezzo's development effort, such as by keeping them abreast of the newest information regarding the Nintendo 3DS system.

Aonuma

This is my third "Iwata Asks" in a row! I'm Eiji Aonuma, producer of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D. I'm the one who placed a burden on everyone to satisfy my desire to remake the Water Temple.[3] (laughs)

3. Water Temple: A challenging dungeon that appears in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

Iwata

All right, thank you. Nintendo asked Grezzo to take care of the production of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D. When we thought about releasing The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time for the Nintendo 3DS system, it was like fate how all the conditions pointed toward Grezzo, so I spoke directly with Ishii-san. Ishii-san, could I ask you to start by telling me how the plan for The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D began?

Ishii

Yes. At first, I didn't know anything when you called me in.

Iwata

Right. I said, "I need to talk with you, so please come to Kyoto," like I was giving you a summons. (laughs) That wasn't how I intended it, though. Sorry if I made you nervous.

Ishii

No, not at all. (laughs) But I hadn't heard anything beforehand, and the atmosphere suggested it was something top secret. To be honest, I had a hunch it might be about new hardware.

Iwata

You have good instincts then. One reason I did need to have you come to Kyoto was so you could see the Nintendo 3DS, which was still under development.

Ishii

When I saw the Nintendo 3DS in Kyoto and heard about The Legend of Zelda, it was like a bolt from the blue!

Iwata

We revealed the Nintendo 3DS and brought up the new Zelda idea to you at the same time.

Ishii

Yeah. To be honest, when I heard that, I thought, "This is a great opportunity!" and "Uh-oh…" at the same time. Fans the world over love Ocarina of Time and it is one of Nintendo's foremost titles, so one false step could damage the brand. And lots of people have their own idea of what the game was like.

Iwata

Lots of people talk about their memories of it.

Ishii

Yeah. I often compare making video games to cooking. If game developers are like cooks, then the games they make are like food. Just as the techniques of the cooks influence the way their food tastes, the techniques and experience of game developers appear in the games.

So I thought it would be a failure as a product if people who made the original game weren't

involved, causing it to turn out as something that was merely somewhat like the original game, something that looked the same but tasted different. I felt like an important theme this time was how we could make The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D today.

Iwata

This is going way back, but what was your first impression of the Nintendo 3DS system?

Ishii

At first, I felt a joy as if I had returned to my boyhood. It was surprising to survey the game world as if it were really there, spreading out before me.

Iwata

Tonooka-san, you were there that day, too.

Tonooka

Yes. What first surprised me was the 3D. Until I saw the glasses-free 3D, I couldn't imagine how it would look. The moment I saw it, I thought it was incredible. Then, when I heard about The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, my mind just went blank. (laughs)

Iwata

Oh? (laughs) How did the rest of you react?

Ishii

Ever since establishing Grezzo, one of our goals has been to be involved with development of software for hardware that hadn't been released yet. So everyone was filled with surprise and excitement because we could make it ourselves. It was like a dream come true.

Iwata

But it must have been hard to develop a game for hardware still under development. What was that like for you as programmers, Tonooka-san and Moriya-san?

Tonooka

First of all, whatever we did, it was all without prior example, so we went through an intense process of trial and error. But it really helped that Shimizu-san fed us every bit of new information about the Nintendo 3DS system.

Shimizu

I have meetings in Tokyo and Kyoto every week, so I conveyed the information I got there to Grezzo so they could make their product.

Iwata

How about you, Moriya-san?

Moriya

I mostly felt lucky to be involved with hardware based around such a novel concept as 3D. As I was working on it, I realized what a high degree of freedom exists in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. Each person has their own way of solving the challenges posed by the game.

For example, take the scene in which you set a spiderweb on fire. Lots of people, including me, have Link roll forward or swing his torch to light it, but some people use how the tip of the torch lowers when he is holding the shield. So when I heard that the fire wouldn't light, I thought, "Uh-oh… this isn't gonna be easy." (laughs)

Iwata

The ways to solve that are stuck in the players' memories, so you have to recreate those, too.

Moriya

Right. When I looked into why the tip of the torch wouldn't light the fire, I realized that Link's arms and legs were longer and his waist higher, since we had designed him a little more to today's styles. This had caused the angle between his sword and the ground to change, so the tip of the torch wouldn't light the fire.

Iwata

You wanted to update the game, but when you did, certain elements fell apart.

Moriya

Right. During development, we talked frequently about what we could do to fill in the 13-year gap since the original game was released. A mere port would reduce the product's appeal by half.

Iwata

Ikuta-san, how were you involved?

Ikuta

I worked to make sure information flowed between Nintendo, Grezzo and the Mario Club.[4] Actually, I volunteered to be in this project! (laughs)

4. Mario Club Co., Ltd.: It conducts debugging and testing on Nintendo software during development.

Aonuma

Ikuta-san is extremely into The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. If you ask her about The Legend of Zelda, a flood of opinions pours forth!

Iwata

She's a walking dictionary of Zelda lore! (laughs) Does she know more than you, Aonuma-san?

Aonuma

Yes, I think so. You could say she's a walking specifications manual! (laughs) We used her thoughts to check whether what players of the original game experienced was present in the new one.

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The Idealized Borderline

Iwata

Remaking The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time to feel like it did when it came out in 1998 but also to suit tastes today must have been a struggle full of contradictions. Ishii-san, how did you solve that?

Ishii

My stance with regard to how to change it was to think about it after talking to the original staff, beginning with Aonuma-san, about the spirit of their group when they made the original game and what they thought was important. What I sought more than anything in this project was a shared sense of values with the original staff. Without that, I thought we would fail.

Iwata

You tried to make sure discrepancies didn't arise between Grezzo and the original staff as you talked back-and-forth. But I doubt you were all headed in the same direction from the very start.

Ishii

No. As creators, we were itching to plunge ahead with our own ideas. At first, each staff member's eyes tended to focus on details, seeing points rather than the whole plane, so to speak. But as we talked with the original staff, a shared sense arose of what to fix where.

Tonooka

I thought another point was what I would call "memory complementing"—figuring out how the fans' memories and our thoughts might complement each other.

Iwata

It's a 13-year-old game, so you have to achieve the right visual balance in consideration of how it has been idealized in the fans' heads to a certain extent.

Moriya

Yes. One of our staff members really loves The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. He has in his head an idealized borderline. Making the game today at any level beneath that borderline is unimaginable to him. But if you focus on that too much, the overall balance would suffer and cooler heads would feel like the game had changed too much, so the team's approach see-sawed back and forth.

Iwata

How did you handle such differing approaches?

Moriya

We sped up revealing it and had Ikuta-san and others try out parts of it. We would ask how it differed from what they had imagined, and then we would fix it. One conflict arose when, as programmers, we wanted to get rid of bugs. But the staff members who had played the old game said the bugs were fun! We were like, "What?!" (laughs)

Iwata

Yes, that is an area of conflict.

Moriya

It wouldn't be fun if your friends couldn't say, "Do you know about this?" So we left them in if they didn't cause any trouble and were beneficial.

Iwata

So you implemented them as you would specs, rather than treating them like bugs. It took some work and you had to go out of your way, but you preserved the spirit of the original.

Moriya

Yes. If something simply could not be allowed to stand, we begrudgingly fixed it, so some bugs don't appear, but we left in as many as we could, so people will grin over that.

Iwata

What other discrepancies did you solve from the viewpoint of programming?

Moriya

Problems arise when recreating the original Z-targeting mark[5] in the stereoscopic space of the Nintendo 3DS system. When you lock on in the original, it looks like a person hiding behind another comes to the front, but in 3D, the perspective breaks down. So for the Nintendo 3DS system, we adjusted it so the mark becomes semitransparent when there's depth involved, so the visual sense of distance is preserved.

5. Original Z-targeting mark: A mark that appears when the player presses the Z Button. Not only does the viewpoint shift to a view from directly behind Link™, but Link can also talk with characters at a distance and gain an advantage in battle by locking on to enemies. In The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, players press the L Button.

Aonuma

I didn't notice that problem until development. In 2D, it had been skillfully done so as to gloss over any discrepancies, but in 3D we had to replace it so it would fit well into the 3D environment.

Iwata

When a game's graphics change to 3D, a lot of new discrepancies arise, so you had to address those points as well.

Aonuma

Yes. It was hard enough just dealing with the Nintendo 3DS system's increased frame rate.[6]

6. Frame rate: The number of times in one second that the image on the screen is refreshed.

Moriya

Yeah. That was the hardest this time. The trouble that the original staff had experienced was visible in the program source code. For example, there were remains of frantic calculations written in it, like 10 + 1 + 2 − 5. It must have been really tight.

Iwata

It was not easy to change the frame rate of the software created in the past. Especially considering that the original game included different frame rates between the heavier and lighter processing parts.

Moriya

That's right. When there was a number assuming a processing delay, we held our heads in dismay!

Aonuma

Back then, we might assume a processing delay would occur, but we would work hard to find a way so that players wouldn't pick up on it. In particular, the battle against Ganon[7] was sluggish.

7. Ganon: A boss character that appears in The Legend of Zelda series.

Iwata

But that slightly heavy feeling made Ganon seem large and heavy.

Aonuma

That's right! If his movements were swift and sharp, it would be weird.

Shimizu

Recreating that is hard.

Tonooka

With regard to collision detection[8] between Link and monsters, the original was 20 times in 1 second, but this time it's 30 times and the movement is smoother. But Ikuta-san said, "Isn't it more difficult than before?" I had tried to program it so the difficulty wouldn't change, but the more precise collision detection had changed the way it feels. So I was careful about such things to make sure it felt as similar to the original as possible.

8. Collision detection: The range according to which the game determines that the player-character or an enemy has been hit.

Ikuta

Sorry, I didn't know the reason. I just felt like something was different.

Tonooka

I'm impressed that you noticed! (laughs)

Aonuma

That's right. You never forget what you learn with your body. Experience is important.

Iwata

Just like learning to ride a bicycle, once your fingers learn a game, they never forget how it feels.

Aonuma

I've always worked on The Legend of Zelda series, so each new installment should take the place of the previous ones in my memory, but when I play The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, my memories from that time come back. Game memories are probably all packed away somewhere so when you play just a little, they all come back. That's why it's important that we make it so those memories and the new remade version perfectly coalesce.

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"I've Got to Fix the Water Temple!"

Iwata

Aonuma-san, what was your motivation for making The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D?

Aonuma

As I alluded to when I introduced myself earlier, I wanted to do something about the Water Temple. Everyone talks about it, so it's been a longstanding wish of mine these 13 years!

Iwata

No matter how much praise The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time has garnered, the Water Temple has always been an issue—like a bone caught in your throat for 13 years.

Aonuma

Yeah. The worst thing was thinking about how many people may have given up there. So this time, if we used the Nintendo 3DS system's two screens, I thought, "Link can put on and take off his Iron Boots in a flash!" So we were like, "Let's do it!"

Iwata

If you didn't, you'd have to listen to it your whole life! (laughs)

Aonuma

Yeah! That was my prime motivation. But when it came to understanding players' memories of the original game, each person on the development staff had his or her own thoughts, too, so it was hard finding the right balance for each issue. We set some priorities and tried to fix things that should be fixed.

Iwata

I suppose there were things you wanted to fix the first time around but couldn't.

Shimizu

What solved that splendidly this time was the touch screen. There are buttons in its four corners. You press them with your fingers. That had a direct effect on gameplay and now it's extremely comfortable.

Aonuma

Modern amenities granted my longstanding wish! (laughs) I was certain that with two screens, changing items and checking the map would be much easier.

Shimizu

The Nintendo 64 system had six buttons, whereas the Nintendo 3DS system only has four. In order to solve the problem of not enough buttons, soon after development began, Grezzo formed a DS Touchscreen Testing Team.

Aonuma

They didn't waste a moment! They had begun work even before we had the specifications together.

Iwata

Tonooka-san, was it your idea to put buttons in the four corners?

Tonooka

Yes. The first thing that came to mind when I heard about the project was the difference between the upper and lower screens, so on the bullet train on the way back, I thought, "We should look into that," and thought about a way to do so with the Nintendo DS system. So the idea of putting buttons in the four corners of the touchscreen came from Shimizu-san and our staff.

Aonuma

When that went well, I was confident it could work.

Iwata

Ikuta-san, what did you think as The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time see-sawed back and forth between its old and new versions?

Ikuta

Since I was involved with the Mario Club, I was able to hear directly the thoughts and impressions of people today who played it. I examined what they said and my own thoughts from when I was immersed in it 13 years ago, and then I talked over possible changes with Grezzo, but the first thing they said was, "This schedule is impossible!" In the end, though, they kept making all the necessary corrections and improvements right up until the end.

Aonuma

That's right. They always pull through.

Ikuta

They really do. It's very reassuring. So when it came to the opinions that came out of the Mario Club, I think it's great that I was able to consider with Grezzo whether something was really necessary or whether we should leave it the way it was in the original.

Iwata

You didn't have a relationship in which one side gives orders and the other takes them. And since Grezzo had charge of one of our biggest titles, the whole staff knew they had to release it in a way that would gain the world's approval. It's great that even if they said, "We can't do it," you knew that they would.

Ikuta

Yes. In the latter half of development, I was like, "It's all in your hands!" (laughs) I knew they would handle it, and not just that they would do what I asked, but that it would come back with a little special Grezzo something. And that is apparent in the game. Even if I were watching the same demo scene, it was fresh, like I were seeing it for the first time, and I would think, "Was it like this before?"

Iwata

It has been reborn for today in such a way that even someone like you, who played the original a lot, is impressed.

Aonuma

Yes. It has to work in today's world, so I had to make sure every change was a pleasing one. While Grezzo valued the original, they also didn't hesitate to make changes, so they were a big help. Rather than us giving precise instructions, they came to us, saying, "Here's what we should do."

Iwata

I feel like what Grezzo thought the game should be like and what the original staff thought synced up perfectly. That was a good aspect of this project.

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The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D Development Staff

Just Before Putting It on ROM

Iwata

Why do you at Grezzo think that of all the games out there The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time was so special?

Ishii

It is the representative polygon 3D game. I feel like it is a title in which energy and a challenging spirit exploded in a way that said, "This is what can be done!" As a series goes along, rules usually appear. But with The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, there were no rules to making it.

Iwata

It is true that the Nintendo 64 version of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time came along when video games were changing from 2D to 3D. Since the old 2D rules weren't applicable, everything was made from scratch. Everyone was groping their way forward in the dark, but for some reason there was an odd confidence and faith that they would definitely make it out into the light, and that spirit possessed the whole thing.

Ishii

Something I thought was particularly great with regard to the degree of completion in level design is how the developers didn't simply make maps, but calculated how it would look to Link standing there. In the early days of polygon 3D, it's quite a wonder that they would think of that.

Iwata

Aonuma-san, did you make precise calculations?

Aonuma

It would be cool if I could say yes, but… (laughs)

Iwata

You didn't make precise calculations, but you did try it over and over again to make it look just right.

Aonuma

Yes. I couldn't decide when to call it quits.

Iwata

Something I heard from the original developers that surprised me was how everyone was happy when the due date got pushed back. Usually, people are exhausted and think, "And so the

marathon drags on…" But the team back then was having too much of a good time!

Aonuma

It was demanding, but fun.

Ishii

When you talk to creators of a title adored by fans, they usually say, "It was hard, but fun." That also applies to The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

Iwata

Tonooka-san, what do you think?

Tonooka

Well, when I received the old program, I thought that all of the creators must have been in high spirits. In the comments box of the source program, someone had written something like, "We got an extension. I'm worried about my bonus. But at least now we can make this." (laughs)

Iwata

Huh? Really?!

Tonooka

Yeah. (laughs) And that enthusiasm of the programmers back then inspired us.

Iwata

It would be hard to hold back after seeing that.

Tonooka

Absolutely. (laughs) So we really dedicated ourselves to it. And while it applies to the whole Legend of Zelda series, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time feels handmade. Usually, programmers like to make a system and rules, but The Legend of Zelda isn't a game to quietly conform to those things. The source program itself feels handmade down to the finest details.

Iwata

It isn't systematic. It's a conglomeration of elements made by individual craftsmen, but a conglomeration that hangs together as a total.

Tonooka

That's right. When players get their hands on it, the creators' passion comes across. That may be why players rate it so highly.

Iwata

Moriya-san, what did you think about The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time?

Moriya

Unfortunately, I didn't play the original when it came out, but as I played it during development, I thought, "This game is an adventure!" As I was playing, I suddenly recalled the mountain out back where I used to play as a child, so I think other players must have similar experiences. I felt like I knew why the game is so loved.

Iwata

I see. This project began as remaking The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, but in the end, we put in many elements tailored specifically for the Nintendo 3DS system. The first one that comes to mind is the ability to control where Link is looking using the gyro sensor built into the system. Why did you put that in?

Tonooka

Before Nintendo Conference 2010[9], Aonuma-san said we had to use the gyro sensor.

Shimizu

About one week before, right?

9. Nintendo Conference 2010: An exhibition for professionals in the gaming industry held at Makuhari Messe in Japan on September 29, 2010.

Iwata

About one week beforehand? Aonuma-san, what exactly was it you wanted to do with the gyro sensor?

Aonuma

I didn't want to move the camera with the analog control. This has something to do with changing the line of sight by pointing in The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess[10] for the Wii console. When you push an analog stick, we can make it both ways so that the camera moves up or down, so there are two answers, but with a gyro sensor, they become one. That is something (Shigeru) Miyamoto-san has been saying he wants to fix for some time now.

10. The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess: An action-adventure game released for the Wii™ console and the Nintendo GameCube™ system in December 2006.

Shimizu

Well, there are times when the gyro sensor alone isn't enough, so we also made it so you can use the analog control. Then Moriya-san made it so you can switch back and forth between the gyro sensor and analog control seamlessly. You can choose on or off.

Aonuma

But then in the end, Miyamoto-san…

Ikuta

Right. He gave us a little push. (laughs)

Aonuma

At first, you could only use the gyro sensor to control line of sight in first-person mode when using items and moving the camera from Link's point of view. But at the end of development, two weeks before making the final ROM, right at the last minute, Miyamoto-san said, "Can't you use the gyro sensor to change the line of sight at normal times when you're just moving Link around?"

Iwata

Huh? But that affects every single scene! That's not something you say before you create the master ROM.

Moriya

Yeah. Everyone reacted the same way at first. (laughs)

Aonuma

But we tried doing what we could, and it turned out so that when Link is moving around without using L-targeting to lock on, the camera follows him around, and you can use the gyro sensor to look around.

Moriya

First, we made it with the gyro sensor wide open so you could look around, and from there on we trimmed away what didn't work. We had to reach a conclusion in a mere three days.

Aonuma

Right, we might have fallen behind with the ROM. I felt like Miyamoto-san was testing us.

Tonooka

But when we first got that e-mail from Aonuma-san, it was clear that he wanted to do it, so we thought, "I bet Aonuma-san wants to do this." (laughs)

Aonuma

Huh? Oh, sorry. That is somewhat true. (laughs) I myself had been thinking about allowing players to move the camera using a gyro sensor while Link was moving, but I thought it was impossible since we were so close to putting it on the ROM.

Iwata

But Miyamoto-san suggested what you couldn't say yourself, so you asked as if it were a fortunate thing?

Aonuma

Uh…yeah. We were accomplices. (laughs)

Iwata

Being able to look around adds a surprising amount of reality to the gameworld.

Aonuma

It's like the world of Hyrule is spread out in 360 degrees and you're peering into the screen at it. I'm really glad we could put that in!

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One Mistake is Too Many

Iwata

What else was designed specifically for the Nintendo 3DS system?

Shimizu

I've always wondered if many people were really able to play the Nintendo 64 version of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time all the way through to the end. For example, a lot of people may have got stuck on the Water Temple and played no further.

Aonuma

Gah! Stop talking about it! (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)

Shimizu

For that reason, I wanted to put in a help function like in the New Super Mario Bros. Wii[11] and Super Mario Galaxy 2[12] games, and we ended up putting in Hint Movies.

11. New Super Mario Bros.™ Wii: An action game released for the Wii console in 2009.

12. Super Mario Galaxy™ 2: An action game released for the Wii console in 2010.

Iwata

Helping players who get stuck was a goal from the start.

Shimizu

Yes. We give solid hints so beginners can play to the end. And as something specifically for the Nintendo 3DS system, the Navi System kicks in every 60 minutes. Every 60 minutes, the fairy Navi asks if you want to take a break.

But Aonuma-san and I battled, or rather debated, this. Until now in the Legend of Zelda games, if you made a mistake saving, you couldn't take it back, so the games have tended to discourage saving.

Aonuma

Rather, the default was set to "Don't save" even if you chose save.

Shimizu

I asked Aonuma-san if that was really necessary anymore. I didn't get an e-mail reply for a long time, and then after about half a day had passed, I got a reply saying it might be all right. Then I suggested to Grezzo that we make "Save" the default.

Aonuma

I think Ishii-san questioned that as well.

Ishii

Yeah. But I just now learned the background. I had made games in which you have to be careful about saving before, so I made sure to check on that.

Iwata

If you can save by repeatedly punching buttons, you may end up doing something you can't take back.

Ishii

Right. A game's save data is the player's time and memories, so it isn't something that should be easy to overwrite or erase. I was aware that saving is something you must treat with care.

Shimizu

But the Nintendo 3DS system is a portable device you carry around, so for a long time I discussed with Aonuma-san what would be the greater tragedy, losing game time because the battery ran out and you hadn't saved or saving by accident.

Aonuma

These days, everyone is busy, so they usually play video games by stringing together little bits of time. I thought players today would be sadder if they lost game progress they had played but hadn't saved. And we adopt a system whereby saving via repeatedly punching buttons isn't possible, so there's no fear of making a mistake in saving that way.

Moriya

Then all kinds of ideas came up—like a system for leading players to hints when they get stuck— and it quickly shaped up nicely.

Iwata

Ikuta-san, what did everyone in the Mario Club say about the final game?

Ikuta

Most members of Mario Club had not played the original game 13 years ago and were playing it for the first time, but many of them said they got stuck at places we had never imagined they would. They said, "I don't have the necessary information!" and "I have no idea where I'm supposed to go or what I'm supposed to do next!" and "Is this all right?" That led to a lot of new discoveries.

Shimizu

The Mario Club members said they couldn't see the hints easily. I told them that if you don't have some trouble, it won't stay with you as a memory—that there's a point to it not being easy! A hint

can't simply give the answer.

Ikuta

Right. Hints have to be just enough to point you in the right direction.

Iwata

When you solve a puzzle in The Legend of Zelda games, you think, "I am so smart!" We mustn't take that away from the fans!

Aonuma

But when you can't solve a puzzle no matter what, you give up and want an answer. So we redid the Hint Movies over and over as we figured out where to cut them off. And you can't see the Hint Movies unless you go to a certain rock, for example. It wouldn't make for a memory if you could see them right away.

Ikuta

Sometimes we didn't think we should show the last mere fraction of a second and left it out of the Hint Movie. In the end, members playing it for the first time said they could play to the end because of the Hint Movies, so it paid off. I think newcomers will be able to play the adventure to the end without much frustration. We also adjusted the Master Quest[13] at the very, very end.

13. Master Quest: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D includes the Master Quest, in which the dungeons and puzzles are different than in the main game. It is unlocked for play after completion of the main game.

Aonuma

People who play the Master Quest are looking for something formidable. But I didn't think it would be that challenging if it were the same as in the original, so Link takes double damage. The Mario Club loved that.

Iwata

The feeling of achievement, like only you can solve it, is different.

Aonuma

Right. And the world of the Master Quest is a mirror reflection of the main game, so if you go somewhere thinking you've already figured it out once so it'll be easy, you might be out of the game simply by falling off a cliff! You're like, "What?! That's a game over?!" (laughs)

Ikuta

Yeah. In the Master Quest, one mistake is too many!

Tonooka

You can clear a lot of games today just playing them casually, so it feels nice to have to go back and heal before a boss battle. The Master Quest is extremely tense and rewarding.

Shimizu

One time, I got a phone call from Ikuta-san saying she couldn't clear the very first dungeon. (laughs)

Ikuta

I lost over ten times in the dungeon inside the Great Deku Tree.

Iwata

Really? (laughs)

Tonooka

Once you beat the Master Quest, you can brag like you haven't in quite some time!

Iwata

I suppose it has been awhile since we released something so difficult.

Aonuma

We have tended to lower the difficulty of recent Zelda games because we want everyone to reach the goal, like by placing healing items right before a boss battle and so on. But Miyamoto-san has been complaining that without anything to get stuck on, the games don't stick with you as memories.

Iwata

The reason we originally put the Super Guides in New Super Mario Bros. Wii wasn't so anyone could easily beat the game, but on the contrary, it was so that even if we made it difficult but rewarding, lots of people could play it to the end.

Aonuma

Right. This game doesn't lower the difficulty level of the original, but it does offer guidance in the form of Hint Movies so everyone can reach the goal.

Shimizu

The main game has hints and the Master Quest is extra challenging. Quite a good balance for a product to have, wouldn't you say?

Aonuma

The main game is the main game and the Master Quest is the Master Quest. Clearing each one results in a completely different memory. Being able to brag is important. I realized all over again how important that is for a video game.

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Iwata Asks is a series of interviews conducted by former Nintendo Global President **Satoru Iwata** with key creators behind the making of Nintendo games and hardware.

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Nintendo 3DS

See All Volumes

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D Development Staff

The Miracle

Iwata

Ishii-san, what is your sense of accomplishment like now that you have completed The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D?

Ishii

This is self-praise, but I think everyone at Grezzo really did a great job. The staff found it immensely rewarding and the expressions on their faces when they were done told the whole story. I think that is because it was both hard and fun. I feel like the biggest nourishment this time was experiencing that same feeling that the original staff had.

Iwata

Grezzo proposed a lot for this game.

Ishii

I often tell the staff members that we don't make a game because someone tells us to, rather we look ahead and make preparations. If we didn't have that attitude, we would lose our vision of what we should do further down the line.

Iwata

We did ask you to take on this challenge because we expected much from you, and were certain of your attitude toward making video games and of each of your individual strengths, but I feel like you gave it something even more.

Ishii

Thank you. When I struck out on my own with Grezzo, I was extremely interested in the high quality of Nintendo's games. I feel like I got a hint of what lies behind that by working on this game with Miyamoto-san, Aonuma-san, Shimizu-san, Haruhana-san and Takizawa-san.

Iwata

What kind of hint?

Ishii

The overall picture of something only becomes clear when many people look at it. Many at Nintendo adopt that viewpoint. What's more, everyone revises and expands on each other's input and views it from the X axis, so to speak. And I thought it was incredibly interesting how someone like Miyamoto-san adds to that by looking at it from the Y axis.

Iwata

Do you mean like, Miyamoto-san's bird's-eye view?

Ishii

Yes. When Miyamoto-san was playing the game, he said, "This will make the players happy or not..." That simple statement made a great impression on me. Miyamoto-san has a special strength for seeing things, for changing his standpoint, its height and breadth.

Iwata

I also think Miyamoto-san's capacity for changing his viewpoint is amazing. The speed with which he finds a new viewpoint and the sheer number of means at his disposal is astounding.

Ishii

This time, I was able to see up close how Miyamoto-san's point of view raises the entire Nintendo staff to a higher level. Something incredible about Nintendo is how so many people work from a director's point of view, saying, "How high can I raise this to the extent within my view?" So we at Grezzo couldn't simply let you show us up!

Iwata

I see. How about you, Tonooka-san?

Tonooka

When it first came to developing a game for hardware that hadn't been out in the world yet, I experienced a mixture of excitement and unease. But as I talked with Miyamoto-san, Aonuma-san, Shimizu-san and Ikuta-san, my unease slipped away. Through talking with everyone, I was able to face everyone's memories of the old game and solve each issue one by one.
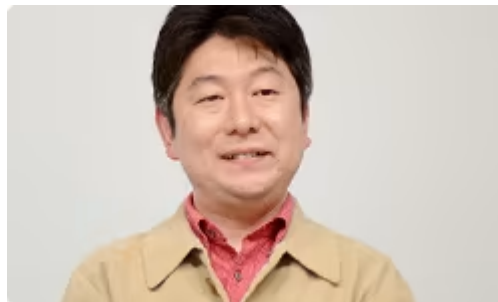
Iwata

You wear a pleasant expression that says you overcame something. How about you Moriya-san?

Moriya

The last year has been one mad scramble. I think the staff did a great job and I think the enthusiasm of the original developers came across through the old source code.

There were about seven programs for one boss. With regard to incomplete portions, someone had written a note saying, "I'm relying on…whoever's next." I wonder who that meant? (laughs)

Iwata

Huh? Was there really such a note? Like a time capsule, the source code contains feelings from the past.

Aonuma

It's less a time capsule than a curse! (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)

Moriya

When the staff members saw the source code, they got pumped up and development fell into a nice groove. Something that really pleased me was when we submitted the first ROM and everyone at Nintendo said, "Ahh, this is The Legend of Zelda!" That helped me. Because of that, I thought, "This is the right way to go!" and felt at ease.

Aonuma

I was surprised then at how much you could do in such a short period of time.

Ishii

Aonuma-san, when we saw everyone enjoying the ROM, it really encouraged us. Seeing those happy expressions on the faces of the original staff members strengthened our feeling that we could make a good version of The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time for the Nintendo 3DS system.

Iwata

I see. How about you, Ikuta-san?

Ikuta

I don't think releasing the exact same game would have been very pleasing—to me, either. My own feelings and environment have changed over the years, so if I were to play the same game, it wouldn't move me the same way.

But with this game, it's like the same feeling from before is in my hands but as something new. I want as many people as possible to experience that.

Iwata

That's right. If anyone thinks of this as a simple port, I would like to ask that they take a second look. As one in the Tokyo Software Development Department, one who in some ways was closest to Grezzo, how did it look to you, Shimizu-san?

Shimizu

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time is one of my favorite three games, so my first feeling was, "I've got to do something!" As I played through, I thought that Grezzo truly had done a fine job complementing my memories of the game.

The game has lots of sub-events, so it would be a shame to just look at the Hint Movies and race to the end. I hope players will flounder around a bit as they move forward.

And the Nintendo 3DS system has the Game Memo function that you can use anywhere—perfect for this game. If you think you might forget something, you can press the HOME button and take notes as you play.

Iwata

All right. How about you, Aonuma-san?

Aonuma

I really feel as if everyone helped me out this time. Grezzo's desire to do an ever better job came across every day and we developed a relationship of trust, so we could make all sorts of unreasonable demands!

And Shimizu-san did a lot to help in Tokyo and Ikuta-san made solid reports on the situation at Grezzo and thought together with me about what we should do. That made my work as producer easier and more rewarding each day, so it was enjoyable.

I'm also really pleased to hear the staff from Grezzo say that they could sense the feelings of the original staff. I want to thank them for making the game in consideration of our feelings. I'm surprised they could.

Iwata

The original team plunged ahead into impenetrable darkness 13 years ago with nothing but confidence, youth and enthusiasm, and that willpower, through the comments in the source code, "possessed" the developers at Grezzo.

As a result, the original team accepted Grezzo's output and you passed ideas back and forth, saying, "It would be like this now." Seeing that, I felt like it was a kind of miracle.

Aonuma

I do think it's a miracle.

Iwata

The game born of that miracle is not just a port. It is The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time reborn today at an even higher level! While I may be going a little overboard, I feel like The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time is a miracle that was meant for the Nintendo 3DS system all along!

Aonuma

Yes, it was destined to turn out this way 13 years later.

Tonooka

Maybe that's what was meant in the source code by "whoever's next." (laughs)

Aonuma

Right. It wasn't a curse, but a prophecy! (laughs)

Everyone

(laughs)

Iwata

I'm glad we could have so much fun talking today. Thank you.

Everyone

Thank you!

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